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Art Unit: 3700

Page 2

CLMPTO

TRH

10/01/04

1. (Canceled)

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Presented) An intervertebral support system, comprising:

a center portion dimensioned to be positioned in an intervertebral space, said center portion having a generally flat top surface, a generally flat bottom surface, a top recess formed in the top flat surface facing generally cranially when the center portion is positioned within the intervertebral space, and a bottom recess formed in the bottom flat surface facing generally caudally when the center portion is positioned within the intervertebral space;

a top portion having a generally flat top surface and a bottom recess facing generally caudally which interlocks with the top recess in the center portion when the top portion is positioned on top of the center portion within the intervertebral space; and

a bottom portion having a generally flat bottom surface and a top recess facing generally cranially which interlocks with the bottom recess in the center portion when the center portion is positioned on top of the bottom portion within the intervertebral space,

wherein the top flat surfaces in the center portion and the top portion are generally co-planar when the top portion is positioned on top of the center portion, and wherein the bottom flat surfaces of the center portion and bottom portion are generally co-planar when the bottom portion is positioned under the center portion.

7. (Original) The intervertebral support system of claim 6, wherein each of the top and bottom surfaces have a plurality of small grooves formed therein, the grooves increasing sliding friction across the top and bottom surfaces.

8. (Previously Presented) An intervertebral support system, comprising:

a center portion having top and bottom recesses;

a top portion having a bottom recess, the bottom recess in the top portion interlocking with the top recess in the center portion when the top portion is positioned on top of the center portion; and

a bottom portion having a top recess, the top recess in the bottom position interlocking with the bottom recess in the center portion when the center portion is positioned on top of the bottom portion, wherein the top and bottom portions are positioned parallel to one another and perpendicular to the center portion when the top portion is positioned on top of the center portion and the bottom portion is positioned under the center portion.

9. (Canceled)

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17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously Presented) A method of supporting adjacent vertebrae, by assembling an intervertebral support assembly between adjacent vertebrae, comprising:

advancing a bottom portion having a top recess into a patient's intervertebral space;

advancing a center portion having top and bottom recesses into the patient's intervertebral space; and

advancing a top portion into the patient's intervertebral space, wherein the top portion has a bottom recess which interlocks with the top bottom recess in the center portion, and the bottom portion has a top recess which interlocks with the bottom recess in the center portion such that a

top surface of the top portion is generally coplanar with the top surface of the center portion, and such that a bottom surface of the bottom portion is generally coplanar with the bottom surface of the center portion, wherein the bottom portion and the top portion are advanced in a first posterolateral approach and the center portion is advanced in a second posterolateral approach, wherein the first posterolateral approach is generally perpendicular to the second posterolateral approach.

19. (Previously Presented) A method of supporting adjacent vertebrae, by assembling an intervertebral support assembly between adjacent vertebrae, comprising:

advancing a bottom portion having a top recess into a patient's intervertebral space;

advancing a center portion having top and bottom recesses into the patient's intervertebral space; and

advancing a top portion into the patient's intervertebral space, wherein the top portion has a bottom recess which interlocks with the top bottom recess in the center portion, and the bottom portion has a top recess which interlocks with the bottom recess in the center portion such that a top surface of the top portion is generally coplanar with the top surface of the center portion, and such that a bottom surface of the bottom portion is generally coplanar with the bottom surface of the center portion, wherein the intervertebral support assembly has an X-shape.

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25. (Canceled)

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27. (Canceled)